

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for billing a Buyer of telecommunication service for call attempts presented to a telecommunication switch, associated with a switching point on a telecommunication network, routed to a first Carrier of a plurality of Carriers in accordance with economic incentives arrived at through a bidding process involving a central processor, referred to as a Moderator, comprising the steps of:
  - a. in the Buyer, formulating a request for telecommunication service over at least one route or route segment on at least one telecommunication network during at least one specific future time interval and transmitting the request to the Moderator;
  - b. in the Moderator, processing the request and distributing a processed request to a plurality of Carriers;
  - c. in at least the first Carrier, receiving the processed request, formulating a response to the processed request and transmitting the response, including economic incentive data, to the Moderator;
  - d. in the Moderator, receiving the responses from at least the first Carrier, entering the economic incentive data from at least the first Carrier in the Moderator's database, and processing the economic incentive data to generate carrier selection data;
  - e. in the Moderator, transmitting at least a portion of the economic incentive data contained in the response received by the Moderator, to at least a portion of the plurality of Carriers;
  - f. in the Moderator, processing at least a portion of the information contained in the request, the identity of the Buyer submitting the request, the identity of the first Carrier

fulfilling the request, and the economic incentive data transmitted by the first Carrier to the Moderator in response to the request, to produce a billing record and storing the billing record in a billing database; and

g. in the Moderator, processing the billing record to generate a bill for telecommunication service associated with the request.

- 5        2. A method of Claim 1 in which the Moderator transmits a bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier.
3. A method of Claim 2 in which the bill is transmitted to the Buyer and the first Carrier prior to the specific future time interval.
4. A method of Claim 1 further comprising posting the bill in electronic form at an Internet website or a computer bulletin board accessible to the Buyer and the first Carrier.
5. A method of Claim 1 further comprising transferring payment from the Buyer to the first Carrier.
6. A method of Claim 5 comprising transferring payment from the Buyer to the Moderator and from the Moderator to the first Carrier.
7. A method of Claim 1 in which the Buyer is a reseller of telecommunication service.
8. A method of Claim 1 in which at least a portion of the processing and communication functions of the Moderator are performed by an adjunct computer.

9. A method for billing a Buyer of telecommunication service for call attempts presented to a telecommunication switch, associated with a switching point on a telecommunication network, routed to a first Carrier of a plurality of Carriers in accordance with economic incentives arrived at through a bidding process involving a central processor, referred to as a Moderator, comprising the steps of:

- a. in the Buyer, formulating a request for telecommunication service over at least one route or route segment on at least one telecommunication network during at least one specific future time interval and transmitting the request to the Moderator;
- b. in the Moderator, processing the request and distributing a processed request to a plurality of Carriers;
- c. in at least the first Carrier, receiving the processed request, formulating a response to the processed request and transmitting the response, including economic incentive data, to the Moderator;
- d. in the Moderator, receiving the response from at least the first Carrier, entering the economic incentive data from at least the first Carrier in the Moderator's database, and processing the economic incentive data to generate carrier selection data;
- e. in the Moderator, transmitting at least a portion of the economic incentive data contained in the responses received by the Moderator, to at least a portion of the plurality of Carriers;
- f. in the Moderator, transmitting to a billing computer at least a portion of the information contained in the request, the identity of the Buyer submitting the request, the identity of the first Carrier selected to fulfill the request, and the economic incentive data transmitted by the first Carrier to the Moderator in response to the request;

g. in the billing computer, receiving the information transmitted by the Moderator in Step f., processing such information to produce a billing record, and storing the billing record in a billing database; and

h. in the billing computer, processing the billing record to generate a bill for  
5 telecommunication service associated with the request.

10. A method of Claim 9 in which the billing computer transmits a bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier.

11. A method of Claim 10 in which the bill is transmitted to the Buyer and the first Carrier prior to the specific future time interval.

12. A method of Claim 9 in which the billing computer transmits the bill to the Moderator and the Moderator transmits the bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier.

13. A method of Claim 9 further comprising posting the bill in electronic form at an Internet website or a computer bulletin board accessible to the Buyer and the first Carrier.

14. A method of Claim 9 further comprising transferring payment from the Buyer to the first Carrier.

15. A method of Claim 14 comprising transferring payment from the Buyer to the Moderator and from the Moderator to the first Carrier.

16. A method of Claim 9 in which the Buyer is a reseller of telecommunication service.

17. A method of Claim 9 in which the billing computer is controlled by an agent independent  
20 of the Moderator.

18. A method of Claim 9 in which the billing computer is a computer adjunct to the Moderator.

19. A method for billing a Buyer for telecommunication service used during a billing period,  
resulting from a bidding process in which a Buyer transmits to a moderating computer a

request for telecommunication service to be provided at a specific future time interval and, in response to such a request, the moderating computer collects economic incentive data from each Carrier of a plurality of Carriers, processes the economic incentive data and selects a first Carrier of the plurality of Carriers to provide telecommunication service to the Buyer, based on an economic choice, wherein the billing method comprises:

- 5 a. storing in the database of the moderating computer a request identifier associated with the request for telecommunication service, the Buyer submitting the request, the first Carrier selected to fulfill the request, and the economic incentive data transmitted by the first Carrier to the moderating computer in response to the request;
- b. in the moderating computer, receiving telecommunication service usage data, including at least a Buyer identifier, a first Carrier identifier, an usage reporting interval and the amount of telecommunication service used;
- c. associating the telecommunication service usage data with the request identifier to produce a billing record including the request identifier, the Buyer identifier, the first Carrier identifier, the telecommunication service usage data, and the portion of the economic incentive data applicable to the telecommunication service used by the Buyer;
- d. storing the billing record in a billing database; and
- e. sorting the billing database by Buyer identifier and generating a bill for telecommunication service usage associated with each Buyer identifier and the applicable request identifier during the billing period.

20. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer sorts the billing database by Buyer identifier and by first Carrier identifier and generates bills for telecommunication service usage associated with each Buyer identifier and the applicable first Carrier identifier during the billing period.
- 5 21. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from telecommunication equipment measuring the telecommunication service provided to the Buyer by the first Carrier.
22. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from the Buyer's local exchange carrier.
23. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from the first Carrier.
24. A method of Claim 19 in which the telecommunication service usage data includes information identifying the telecommunication equipment measuring the telecommunication service provided to the Buyer by the first Carrier.
- 15 25. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer receives telecommunication service usage data by querying the telecommunication equipment measuring telecommunication service provided to the Buyer by the first Carrier.
26. A method of Claim 19 in which the telecommunication service usage data includes at least one of the following items of information: the type of telecommunication service used; the quality of service provided; the maximum and minimum bandwidth used; and

the volume of telecommunication traffic sent by the Buyer during specified intervals within the billing period.

27. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer transmits a bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier.

5 28. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer generates and transmits a bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier prior to the specific future time interval.

29. A method of Claim 19 in which the Buyer is a reseller of telecommunication service.

30. A method of Claim 19 in which the moderating computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from telecommunication equipment measuring telecommunication service provided to an end user served by a Buyer who is a reseller.

31. A method for billing a Buyer for telecommunication service used during a billing period, resulting from a bidding process in which a Buyer transmits to a moderating computer a request for telecommunication service to be provided at a specific future time interval and, in response to such a request, the moderating computer collects economic incentive data from each Carrier of a plurality of Carriers, processes the economic incentive data and selects a first Carrier of the plurality of Carriers to provide telecommunication service to the Buyer, based on an economic choice, wherein the billing method comprises:

a. in a billing computer, receiving from the moderating computer and storing in a database a request identifier associated with the request for telecommunication service, the Buyer submitting the request, the first Carrier selected to fulfill the

request, and the economic incentive data transmitted by the first Carrier to the moderating computer in response to the request;

- 5        b. in the billing computer, receiving telecommunication service usage data, including at least a Buyer identifier, a first Carrier identifier, an usage reporting interval and the amount of telecommunication service used;
- c. in the billing computer, associating the telecommunication service usage data with the request identifier to produce a billing record including the request identifier, the Buyer identifier, the first Carrier identifier, the telecommunication service usage data, and the portion of the economic incentive data applicable to the telecommunication service used by the Buyer;
- d. storing the billing record in a billing data base; and
- e. sorting the billing database by Buyer identifier and generating a bill for telecommunication service usage associated with each Buyer identifier and the applicable request identifier during the billing period.

- 15      32. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer sorts the billing database by Buyer identifier and by first Carrier identifier and generates bills for telecommunication service usage associated with each Buyer identifier and the applicable first Carrier identifier during the billing period.
33. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from the moderating computer.

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34. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from telecommunication equipment measuring the telecommunication service provided to the Buyer by the first Carrier.

35. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from the Buyer's local exchange carrier.

36. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from the first Carrier.

37. A method of Claim 31 in which the telecommunication service usage data includes information identifying the telecommunication equipment measuring the telecommunication service provided to the Buyer by the first Carrier.

38. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer receives telecommunication service usage data by querying telecommunication equipment measuring telecommunication service provided to the Buyer by the first Carrier.

39. A method of Claim 31 in which the telecommunication service usage data includes at least one of the following items of information: the type of telecommunication service used; the quality of service provided; the maximum and minimum bandwidth used; and the volume of telecommunication traffic sent by the Buyer during specified intervals within the billing period.

40. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer transmits a bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier.

41. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer generates and transmits a bill to the Buyer and the first Carrier prior to the specific future time interval.

42. A method of Claim 31 in which the Buyer is a reseller of telecommunication service.

43. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer receives the telecommunication service usage data from telecommunication equipment measuring telecommunication service provided to an end user served by a Buyer who is a reseller.

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44. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer is controlled by an agent independent of the moderating computer

45. A method of Claim 31 in which the billing computer is a computer adjunct to the moderating computer.

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